

HEE funded Functional Skills Exams pilot FAQs

1. How do I register interest?

Submit your *Expression of Interest* form via the Open Awards website:
<https://openawards.org.uk/what-we-offer/health-education-england-functional-skills/>

Information required includes:

- Employer details
- Key contact information
- Choice of assessment method (See below)
- Anticipated learner numbers and potential timescales

2. What methods of assessment are available?

- Online assessments invigilated remotely by Open Awards
- Online assessments (invigilated onsite by the employer/centre)
- Online assessments (invigilated remotely by the employer/centre)
- Paper-based assessments (invigilated onsite by the employer/centre)

3. Is this offer open to all Health and Social Care employers?

Yes. This offer is open to all Health and Social Care employers who deliver NHS commissioned services. The case for learners who are in the workforce pipeline, or aspire to be, will be looked at on a case-by-case basis. In this situation, please email talentforcare@hee.nhs.uk

4. My learners won't be ready/able to sit their assessments by March 31st 2021. What happens for them?

We are asking all employers who are interested in this pilot to register their interest with Open Awards by 31st March 2021. If you think that your learners will be ready for assessment this academic year, we hope to be able to help you.

Whilst advertising this opportunity with funding from this financial year, we are also working on a longer-term solution to this challenge, which we hope to implement in the financial year 21-22. If you register your interest with us you should be able to benefit from either the pilot, or the longer-term solution, or both.

5. I'm a small employer without the resources to become an exam centre. What do I do?

Selecting the option for Open Awards to invigilate your assessment will remove many of the tasks associated with becoming an exam centre and will mean your input will be focused around scheduling and registering learners, ensuring they are prepared for assessments and supporting the learner once results are released.

Open Awards will work with you once you have submitted your expression of interest form to further explain the steps.

6. My learners haven't studied using bksb. Can they still access the funded exams pilot?

Yes. This pilot is not exclusive to those who have studied through bksb.

7. I'm an employer-provider, who has already drawn down funding. My awarding organisation isn't providing FS assessments in a timely manner and I want to access this offer. But I'm concerned about implications in terms of funding and success rates... what do I do?

When registering a learner with Open Awards for a Functional Skills qualification, we ask that you confirm whether they are already registered with another awarding body and to inform that awarding body of the transfer. Open Awards will continue to liaise with Ofqual and other awarding bodies that provide Functional Skills as we work together to support apprentices across sectors.

If you choose to access this project, an Open Awards Business Development Manager will work with you to identify any specific issues you are facing around transferring learners, funding, achievement rates or accessing assessments. They will also work with you on preparing learners for an Open Awards assessment to ensure achievement rates aren't negatively affected by a change in awarding body. Success rates will be monitored throughout the pilot to ensure learners are not accessing assessments before they are ready.

8. Won't this offer affect the success rates of providers who have already drawn down funding?

We know that across the country thousands of learners are currently at gateway, unable to finish their apprenticeship because of difficulties concerning FS exams. The nature of this pilot means that we won't be able to help every learner, but this pilot represents a new approach to the problem from the health and care sector to a pressing workforce challenge. We hope and believe that this offer will mean apprentices can progress in their career. It will mean more clinical workers able to care for patients and more non-clinical support to the system.

9. The support my learners need goes beyond self-study and exam provision. What other support is there?

This combination of self-study learning support from bksb and support for exams has long been requested by employers across the country, but it is not the only pillar to the support on offer from the Skills for Life programme. The [Skills for Life section on HASO](#) contains links to lots of further support for numeracy, literacy including for ESOL speakers and digital skills. There are also tools to help implement this learning support in a strategic way and an invitation to join the [Skills for Life network of employers](#). The team is also looking at ways to tackle other barriers to progression - such as the lack of recognition of level 3 and level 5 equivalencies in some Universities. But we always want to know about what support employers need – it guides everything we do. If you would like to see additional programmes, resources or interventions funded, email us at talentforcare@hee.nhs.uk